

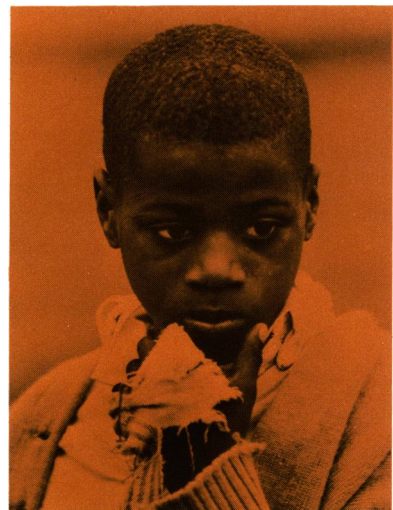
# CONSUMER ADVOCACY

Health care is too important to be left solely to the professionals. The development of a comprehensive health care system available to every American demands active consumer participation in the governance of every aspect of the system. Such participation requires the education of both consumers and professionals, availability to consumer representatives of technical assistance and consultation, the development of the consumer advocacy concept, the widespread use of consumer advisory councils, and frequently consumer control of health facilities. This means effective consumer representation in the policy-making processes of any health facility and organization which receives Federal support, representation which reflects all aspects of the community which is served, with special emphasis on representation of the poor. In policy decisions, a concurrence of a majority of the consumer representatives involved should be required. It demands, above all, public accountability in every aspect of the health care system.

No health care system can long offer meaningful choices to consumer without some regulation which sees to it that gaps are filled, unnecessary duplication avoided, and costs, efficiency, and quality of operations are controlled. To be effective, responsibility for regulations will probably have to be divided among a number of agencies at different levels of government. Regulation of the quality of health services should increasingly emphasize the results health services produce, not just processes and components of medical care such as licensure of professional health workers.

—*Excerpted from the final report of the Aspen Institute-American Assembly, "The Health of Americans" held in Aspen, Colo., March 31–April 4, 1971.*

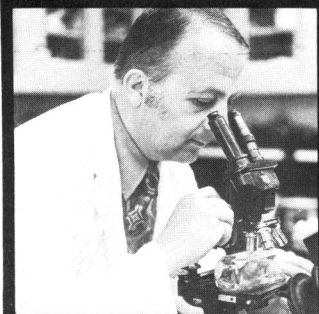
Cover—Pensive boy is typical of the children given health care in a model neighborhood program in Los Angeles. Report begins on page 684. Photo by Paul Conklin



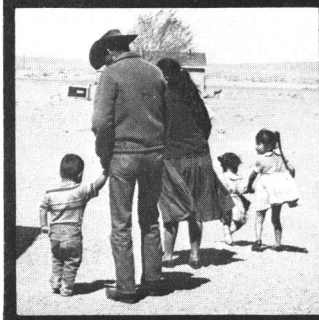
669



697



733



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# HSMHA HEALTH Reports

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## FEATURES

	<i>Page</i>
<b>A new health professional—The orthopedic assistant, <i>James H. Hensley, Norma B. Chernok, Vaso L. Purlia, and Clarence E. Calbert</i></b>	<b>669</b>
<b>Changing composition of voluntary hospital boards. An inevitable prospect for the 1970's, <i>Lowell Eliezer Bellin</i></b>	<b>674</b>
<b>An economic and efficient vasectomy program, <i>Philip M. Savage, Jr.</i></b>	<b>682</b>
<b>A model neighborhood program at a Los Angeles health center, <i>Geraldine B. Branch and Natalie Felix</i></b>	<b>684</b>

## PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, PEOPLE

<b>Oral cancer linked to chewing of betel nut</b>	<b>692</b>
<b>Licensed practical nurses—1967-68 inventory</b>	<b>693</b>
<b>Use of amphetamines to treat school children</b>	<b>694</b>
<b>Mental health research grant awards</b>	<b>694</b>
<b>Blood components shipped interstate</b>	<b>695</b>
<b>Low-cost meter for testing microwave cooking ovens</b>	<b>695</b>
<b>Hospitals participating in PAS study</b>	<b>696</b>
<b>New flu vaccines speeded by new culturing method</b>	<b>697</b>
<b>Abortion requests at D.C. General</b>	<b>698</b>
<b>Norman Jolliffe Fellowship</b>	<b>698</b>
<b>Education notes</b>	<b>698</b>